

4.0 Coordination

4.1 Public Involvement

The location of the study area, in a rural resort region experiencing increasingly urbanized traffic volumes and patterns, presented a unique situation with regard to public involvement. Engaging the affected communities and soliciting their input was a key component of the location study process for the Route 54 Expressway. A Public Involvement Plan was developed for the project, which outlined the proposed methods of communication and use of outreach tools. A wide variety of methods and techniques were used to solicit input and inform the public of the project including: public meetings; small group meetings; presentations to local officials, area transportation groups, and interested stakeholders; informational handouts; comment forms; and news reports.

Throughout the course of the location study process, interaction with the public indicated concerns within the communities of Lake Ozark and Osage Beach and other communities in the vicinity of the study area. The Public Involvement Plan was formulated to meet the needs of residents and business owners in the corridor by tailoring outreach methods, meeting styles and locations, and frequency of interaction.

4.1.1 Summary of Public Concerns

As a result of public outreach efforts, a number of universal issues were identified by the public to be of concern:

- Traffic volume and congestion – Many residents feel this has become a year-round problem, no longer restricted to just the summer months.
- Safety to the traveling motorist – It was noted by many area citizens that accidents throughout the study area are frequent, especially those involving left-turning vehicles.
- Impacts to existing homes and businesses – There was a general sentiment that though some properties would be affected, the recommended alignment should minimize these impacts.
- Concern for future business development opportunities – The proposed expressway's footprint should allow the area to continue to be able to attract a variety of commercial enterprises.
- Environmental impacts – The unique and valued natural features of the area are the reason many people have chosen to live there.
- General agreement that the expressway is necessary, overdue, and should be constructed as soon as possible.
- Costs associated with construction and right of way purchase.

4.1.2 Public Meetings

In order to engage the public and encourage dialogue on the Route 54 Expressway study, public meetings were held throughout the duration of the project. The meetings were held at key project milestones, and focused on sharing information and decision-making processes between the study team and the public. The meetings offered residents, business owners, and other potentially affected interests an opportunity to discuss components of the study with the study team and to have their voices heard.

Two public meetings have taken place to date. The meetings were held in an open-house format, with no formal presentations being made. Individuals were free to examine numerous graphic stations that represented major components of the study. Study team members from MoDOT and the consultant were on hand to provide information about the project, answer questions, and address concerns. Informational handouts were available, and postage-paid comment forms were provided at each meeting for the public to register their thoughts and opinions.

A project mailing list was developed from the sign-in sheets at the first public meeting, and additional names were added following the second public meeting. Names were also added subsequent to communication from area residents.

4.1.2.1 First Public Meeting

The first public meeting was held March 18, 2002 from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Baymont Inn in Lake Ozark, Missouri. One hundred fifteen people attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the public to the study, outline the issues being addressed by the study, and present the preliminary study alternatives for the four-lane expressway.

Notification for the meeting was provided to local media outlets through a press release. In addition, letters of invitation were sent to area congressmen, local officials, and other interested parties.

Twenty-seven comment forms were returned, with two individuals registering their preference on one form. In addition, a letter was received after the meeting from a local property owner whose land would be impacted by the proposed expressway. The following shows their preferences for the alternatives presented.

Alternative A1	11
Alternative A2	4
Alternative B	2
Alternative C	9
Multiple Preference (A1 and A2)	2
Multiple Preference (A1 and C)	1

Written comments included the following concerns:

- Impacts and disruptions to existing businesses.
- Residential impacts, especially those on Mace Road such as Timber Ridge Apartments, Osage Beach Senior Housing, and Lake Ozark Village.
- Environmental impacts, including visual impairments and noise pollution.
- Cost, both in terms of construction expenditures and right of way purchase.

The No Action condition was also presented as an option. Those who expressed an opinion made it clear that such a scenario would not be in the best interests of the area, and that improvements were overdue.

4.1.2.2 Second Public Meeting

The second public meeting was held June 27, 2002 from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Baymont Inn in Lake Ozark, Missouri. Eighty-six people attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to update the public on the study, present the two alternative alignments selected for further evaluation, and show the interchange options under consideration.

Notification for the meeting was provided to local media outlets through a press release, and subsequent news articles were printed prior to the meeting. In addition, letters of invitation were sent to area congressmen, local officials, law enforcement and emergency services, area planning groups, and chambers of commerce. One week prior to the meeting a postcard was sent to individuals on the project mailing list.

Twenty-five comment forms were returned. The following shows their preferences for the alternatives and interchange options presented.

	Single Point Interchange	One-way Couple Interchange	No Interchange Preference
Alternative A1	8	9	1
Alternative C'	0	4	2
No Preference	0	0	1

Written comments included the following concerns:

- Impacts to businesses;
- Traffic volumes – The majority of those expressing an interchange preference acknowledged the efficiency of the one-way couple option in handling projected future traffic;
- Potential for future business development – Those voicing an opinion felt Alternative C' with the one-way couple would best address this issue; and
- Costs.

4.1.2.3 Small Group Meetings

Small group meetings were an important component to the project's overall public outreach efforts, and served to facilitate a meaningful exchange of information, ideas, and dialogue between the study team and interested groups from the region. The study team met several times with municipal officials, area transportation groups, and other potentially affected stakeholders, as follows:

At the onset of the project, meetings were held with the Lake of the Ozarks Council of Local Governments (the area's Regional Planning Commission) and municipal officials from Osage Beach and Lake Ozark. The purpose of the meetings was to introduce the study team and provide an overview of the project goals, schedule, and public involvement plans. Concerns that were raised included impacts to businesses and property owners, current and projected traffic volumes and movements, and a connection to Route 42.

- Lake of the Ozarks Council of Local Governments November 8, 2001
Transportation Advisory Committee
- Osage Beach and Lake Ozark officials November 19, 2001

On February 5, 2002 the study team met individually with local resident and property owner Joyce Mace. The purpose of the meeting was to gain information from Mrs. Mace regarding the historical significance of the Ozark Opry (which Mrs. Mace and her late husband Lee Mace have operated since the 1950s) and the adjacent Mace family home. The Ozark Opry and Mace property are adjacent to each of the four alternative alignment configurations.

Prior to the second public meeting, a series of briefings were conducted for local municipal officials and lake area transportation groups to update them on the project. The study team presented the two alternative alignments selected for further evaluation, preliminary interchange

alignments, and traffic model simulations. The groups were also advised of the upcoming public meeting.

- Osage Beach and Lake Ozark Officials May 9, 2002
- Lake Ozark City Administrator May 9, 2002
- Lake of the Ozarks Council of Local Governments - June 6, 2002¹
Transportation Advisory Committee
- Lake of the Ozarks Transportation Council June 6, 2002²

On May 10, 2002 the study team met individually with local property owner Thomas Loraine. Mr. Loraine had been unable to attend the first public meeting, and had written a letter to MoDOT expressing his interest in and concerns about the study and possible impacts the proposed expressway would have on his property.

4.1.2.4 Holiday Shores Property Owners Group

On August 16, 2002 the study team met individually with Janet Burmeister, president of the Holiday Shores property owners group. The group's members include year-round residents, property owners, and time-share owners of the Holiday Shores, Indian Pointe, Eagle Bay, and Woodland Shores developments. Shortly before this meeting, Ms. Burmeister had become aware of the project during a visit to Osage Beach City Hall. During the August 16 meeting, she voiced concerns to the study team that Alternative A1 represented impacts to the residents and property owners of the developments and to expansion plans that the group wished to undertake.

Subsequent to the August 16 meeting, Ms. Burmeister sent members of the property owners group a petition opposing Alternative A1. Copies of this petition, representing 507 signatures, were forwarded to the study team by Ms. Burmeister. In addition, the study team received 82 individual comments expressing opposition to Alternative A1 from members of the property owners group. These comments were in the form of personal letters and photocopies of the petition. Names and addresses of individuals were added to the study mailing list. A general summary of the concerns expressed included the following:

- Proximity of Alternative A1 to existing residences in the Holiday Shores/Indian Pointe area,
- Disruption of quiet surroundings and rural character of the area,
- Devaluation of property,
- Increase in noise and air pollution,
- Impacts to planned improvements to the development,
- Impacts to visual features of the lake and Pogue Hollow,
- Belief that the study team had already selected Alternative A1 as the preferred alternate, and
- Greater opportunity for future business development with Alternative C'

On September 14, 2002 the study team attended a meeting of the Holiday Shores property owners group in order to provide study information to the group's members and listen to their concerns. In attendance were 92 residents and time-share owners from the Holiday Shores, Indian Pointe, Eagle Bay, and Woodland Shores developments as well as homeowners on

¹ Members of this group in attendance included elected officials from regional municipalities, state congressman Henderson, and a representative from the Eldon Chamber of Commerce.

² In attendance at this meeting were representatives from lake area chambers of commerce, business owners, local citizens, and elected officials and staff members from Osage Beach, and Camdenton, and Miller counties.

Mace, Orville, and Rachel Roads. The study team outlined the history of Route 54 improvements in the lake area, discussed the study's Purpose and Need and the issues the study was addressing, detailed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, and engaged in dialogue with the meeting attendees as a group and individually. Exhibits were available for examination, a study fact sheet was distributed, and a sign-in sheet was circulated. Attendees' names and addresses were added to the study mailing list.

4.1.2.5 Public Hearing

The public hearing for the Route 54 Expressway location study was held Thursday July 17, 2003 at the Baymont Inn in Lake Ozark from 4 to 7 p.m. One hundred twenty-one (121) people attended. The purpose of the hearing was to present the study's alternatives, to indicate the preferred alternative (C'), to display the Draft EA, and to solicit comment and input from the public.

Notification of the meeting was provided to local media outlets through a news release sent June 25, 2003. A public notice was submitted to the Lake Sun Leader newspaper, and was published on June 26, 2003. In addition, letters of invitation were sent to area congressmen, local elected officials, law enforcement and emergency service personnel, area transportation groups, and chambers of commerce. Approximately 2 weeks prior to the hearing, a postcard was sent to individuals on the project mailing list, reminding them of the meeting and encouraging their attendance.

The hearing was held in an open-house format. No formal presentations were made. Attendees were given a handout which contained information about the study including the Purpose and Need for the study; project limits; details of the proposed improvement; why Alternative C' was selected as the preferred alternative; and diagrams of the preferred alternative, Alternatives A1 and A2, and adjacent improvements on Route 54. The handout also included a postage-paid comment form, which could be completed at the meeting or returned to the study team by mail.

Exhibits available for inspection included the following:

- Study timeline – completed milestones were highlighted;
- Preferred alternative (C');
- Alternatives A1 and A2;
- Purpose and Need;
- Environmental constraints;
- Diagram showing the study area and adjacent improvements on Route 54; and
- Traffic information including a computerized traffic model simulation.

Several copies of the Draft EA were available for inspection. Study team members from MoDOT, MACTEC, and CBB were on hand to provide information about the study, to answer questions, and to address concerns. The traffic model simulation served to illustrate projected design year traffic volumes and turning movements for the preferred alternative.

Thirty-two comment forms were submitted at the meeting. Of those, 28 expressed support for the preferred alternative; three acknowledged the need for improvement without expressing a preference; and one requested a copy of the Draft EA and information on adjacent Route 54 improvements.

Additionally, 274 comment forms were received from the Holiday Shores property owners' group. These comment forms represented 407 signatures and expressed support for the preferred alternative (one form was unsigned).

The general sentiments of all those supporting the preferred alternative were as follows:

- Has the least environmental, residential, and business impacts;
- Has the greatest benefit to economic development;
- Solves congestion and safety issues; and
- Minimizes effects to lake viewshed and natural features.

Subsequent to the public hearing, the study team received 35 comment forms in the mail. Of those, five expressed support for the preferred alternative and 30 opposed it. The concerns of those in opposition to Alternative C' can be summarized as follows:

- Walnut Bowls store: 15 comment forms received from the store's owners, managers, employees, accountant, and insurance agent. They opposed Alternative C' because, due to the proposed roadway alignment, the building housing the business would be acquired. In their opinion, this would effectively destroy the business, and with it, several jobs at this location and a related business in Lebanon, Missouri. It was pointed out that the store has been in operation for over 20 years and has generated tremendous amounts of sales tax revenue. It was recommended that the proposed alignment be shifted south to avoid the business.
- Ozark Opry: Nine comment forms received from Joyce Mace and employees. These individuals felt that if a portion of the parking lot was impacted by the preferred alternative, the result would be lost business and eventual loss of jobs. It was pointed out that the Ozark Opry is an area institution which has contributed significantly to the growth and development of the lake region, and which enjoys a nationwide following. It was recommended that the proposed alignment be shifted south to avoid the Opry parking lot.
- Dulle Overhead Doors: Two comment forms received from the store's owners. They recommended that the proposed alignment be shifted to avoid their business.
- Three comment forms stated general opposition to the preferred alternative.
- One comment form, while not explicitly opposing Alternative C', took issue with what the writer perceived to be shortcomings in MoDOT's right of way acquisition policies, especially as related to property this individual owns in the study area.

4.1.2.6 Walnut Bowls/Ozark Opry Property Owners Meeting

On September 16, 2003 the study team met with representatives of Shepherd Hills Factory Outlet (Walnut Bowls store) and the Ozark Opry in the lobby of the Ozark Opry. Representing the Shepherd Hills Factory Outlet were Rod Reid, store owner and George Stanton, land owner. Representing the Ozark Opry were Joyce Mace, the owner, and her brother Carl Williams. MoDOT and MACTEC representatives were present as well. The meeting was held in response to several comments of concern over the preferred alternative, C', that were received after the public hearing from individuals from both Shepherd Hills Factory Outlet and the Ozark Opry. Both interests agreed to meet together.

Mr. Reid's primary concern was that his business is proposed to be acquired as a result of Alternative C'. He and Mr. Stanton asked if the alignment of C' could be shifted to the south to avoid their business. The MoDOT study team said that some shifts in the alignment could be made in the design phase of the project, but that no changes will be made at this stage of study. The study team also suggested that, in lieu of an alignment shift, the wide grass median width could be reduced to more of an urban-type median with a concrete barrier wall. Also, retaining

walls could be constructed to limit the amount of excavation in the area of the store. The study team stated that an alignment shift to the south causes concern as it could impact residential properties along Cabana Lane and it introduces tighter horizontal curves in the expressway.

Ms. Mace's primary concern for the Ozark Opry was that Alternative C' adversely impacted areas used for parking by patrons of the Opry. She also asked if the alignment of C' could be shifted to the south to avoid the parking area. The study team reiterated its concerns of shifting the alignment to the south. The study team concluded that these parking concerns could be handled in better detail during the design phase of the project. It may be possible to provide a new parking area for patrons of the Opry. Additionally, to minimize impacts further, the construction of Alternative C' in the vicinity of the Opry could be conducted during the off-season of the Opry, which is basically from November 1 to April 15.

MoDOT stated that there was no timetable on construction, but the earliest groundbreaking for construction would be 5 years from now. However, this is not likely because of uncertainties in funding.

4.1.3 Other Public Outreach

A toll-free number, 1-888-ASK-MODOT (1-888-275-6636), was made available throughout the study for public questions and comments. Telephone numbers of MoDOT study team members were printed on handouts and other informational material. MoDOT project members provided study information to the media throughout the duration of the project, which resulted in subsequent news reports. Maps of the alternatives were placed in public access areas such as the Osage Beach City Hall. All communication was documented in the Public Involvement Log.

4.2 Agency Coordination

An interagency scoping meeting was held on April 24, 2002 at FHWA in Jefferson City, Missouri. Those in attendance included representatives from FHWA, MoDOT, MACTEC, MDNR, and USEPA. The Purpose and Need for the project was discussed, along with potential alternatives. Overall, the project was well received and the concerns centered around potential impacts to Lake of the Ozarks, the number of potential displacements, social and economic impacts to businesses along existing Route 54, and impacts to an historic property (the Ozark Opry), which is potentially eligible for the NRHP. There was some discussion about the independent utility of the project, since it is sandwiched between two other projects. A copy of the Draft Purpose and Need statement was handed out to all participants with a request for comments. There was a general consensus that there is a need for the project and the participants were pleased with the amount of public involvement meetings and workshops that had been held.